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THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLE AND THE WAR

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The solid black lines show the present political frontiers; the broken lines, the racial frontiers.

THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLE AND THE WAR

I

The issues raised by a great war are always wider and deeper than the immediate causes which bring it about; because war, by sweeping away the timidities of diplomacy and its unwillingness to endanger the existing state of things, seems to bring within reach of realization hopes or theories which in time of peace appear remote and unpractical.

One of the great issues which this war is likely to bring within the realm of practical politics is the fuller realization of what may be called the national principle—the idea, that is, that states ought, so far as possible, to be organized upon a national basis. Those who believe in this principle believe that wherever there exist divided nations which long for unity, or subject nations which aspire to be freed from alien control, it is not only just, and not only desirable in the interests of these nations themselves, but it is also in the long run to the advantage of civilization and humanity at large that these aspirations should be satisfied.

Perhaps it may appear to many people that the nationalist dreams of the Poles, or the Serbians, or the Rumanians, or the Greeks, or the Italians, however warmly we may sympathize with them in theory, are after all no direct concern of the Englishman, but concern only the Poles, Serbians, Rumanians, Greeks, and Italians themselves. But that is a narrow view, for two reasons.

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In the first place the civilization of Europe has in a large degree derived its progressive character from the fact that, while there is a basis of unity common to all the peoples of the west, there has always been a great variety within this unity, caused by the different temperaments, traditions, and modes of life of the various peoples who compose Europe. Each people has its own excellences, and its own contributions to make to the common stock; and the freer all the peoples are left to develop their own civilization in their own way, in rivalry with one another, the better it must be for the world. Each people naturally tends to think its own ways of life and thought the best; and whenever one people gets power over another it inevitably tries to force its own character and ideas upon the subject people. In so far as it succeeds, it impoverishes the common life of civilization by suppressing one of the elements of variety. Of course it is true that there are some peoples even in Europe which have been kept in a backward condition by the accidents of history; and it may perhaps be argued that a backward people will profit from being brought under the tutelage of a more advanced people. That is sometimes true; but it is very dangerous to assume too readily that it is true, especially in the case of European peoples, whose natural abilities, though different, are singularly equal if they have anything like equal opportunities. The Russians, for example, have long been in many ways backward as compared with the French or the Germans. But if they had been forced into a French or a German mould, it is doubtful if Europe would have been enriched by the peculiarly Russian vein of genius shown by a Tolstoy or a Turgenev, or if Northern Asia would have achieved the degree of civilization which Russia has

brought to it. Again, no doubt the Romans were politically superior to the other peoples of the ancient world; but one of the reasons for the gradual decay of civilization in the period of the Roman Empire was just that the Romans had succeeded (in spite of their tolerance) in impressing too high a degree of uniformity upon the world, and in fusing too completely the life-giving variety and contrast of different peoples. In the same way, even though it were true that the 'culture' of the Germans is, as they proclaim, higher than that of any other nation, still if they succeeded in imposing that culture upon the whole civilized world, the result would be stagnation and decay. The greatest security for the progress and vitality of civilization is that there should be the greatest possible variety among civilized states; and this can be best secured by giving to every nation which can establish its title to the name a free chance of developing its own modes of life and its own ideas in its own way. That is the first reason for believing that the extension of the principle of nationality is an issue of great importance for the whole world, and not only for the nations which have yet to establish their unity and freedom.

But there is another, and much more important or practical, reason for believing that the national aspirations of Italians or Serbs directly affect the interests of Englishmen: and that is, that the satisfaction of national aspirations is essential as a safeguard against war. Glance over the history of the nineteenth century, and you will see that almost every revolutionary outbreak, and almost every war or alarm of war which has disturbed Europe, has been due directly or indirectly to unsatisfied aspirations for national unity or freedom. The revolutionary movements of 1820,

1830, and 1848, the Greek war of the twenties, the Italian *Risorgimento*, the three wars which were engineered by Bismarck—all these were the direct outcome of movements for national unity or freedom. Even the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 was deliberately arranged by Bismarck as a means of securing the unity of Germany. Even the Crimean war, though it seemed to turn on other issues, really arose out of the position of the suppressed nationalities of the Turkish Empire, and the same is true of all the Russo-Turkish wars of the nineteenth century. If Western Europe has enjoyed peace since 1871, it is because the nationalist cause had everywhere triumphed in Western Europe by that date, and because with small exceptions there was no survival of the rankling bitterness of unsatisfied national aspirations. And since 1871 the one danger-spot, whose complications have from time to time threatened to plunge Europe into war, has been that region where national aspirations were unsatisfied, or incompletely satisfied—the south-east. It is no mere coincidence that the disastrous war of to-day has arisen directly out of the aspiration of the Serbians for union with their brother Serbs within the Austrian Empire. In view of these facts it is certainly not too much to say that, if the national principle could be carried out in those parts of Europe where it has as yet been incompletely established, the danger of future European wars would be, if not completely removed—that may be too much to hope—at any rate enormously diminished. For that reason the nationalist aspirations of Serbs, Poles, and Rumanians have a very real and practical importance for every Englishman.

II

But although it is true that the extension of the national principle enriches civilization and is a safeguard against war, these benefits can only be realized if the peoples who claim nationhood are in a real sense nations. A nation is more than the inhabitants of a given area of land across which a particular name is printed on the map. It is a body of people so strongly bound together by natural ties of affinity that they readily sympathize with and understand one another, and can live happily together. The bonds which create this affinity vary in character from one case to another, so that it is impossible to give an exact definition of them. But a nation at its highest is united by some community of race, by a common language and the distinctive ideas which that language expresses, by the common possession of fundamental religious and moral ideas, and by a common tradition, or memory of achievements and sufferings shared in the past. It is easy to name real nations which lack one or other of these features. But no people which lacks them all, or most of them, can be called a nation ; nor can the claim to national unity be regarded as a sound one unless, in all the divided sections of the nation, there is a real sense of affinity, and a real desire for unity. Where these things are lacking, the unification, if it is established on merely theoretic grounds, is likely to do more harm than good ; to create, rather than to heal, dissatisfaction.

It is important to keep these considerations in mind when we deal with claims that are put forward on grounds of nationality. For example, the Germans

(a nation very prone to be captivated by theories) asserted in 1871 their right to the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine on the grounds that these provinces had been part of Germany up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, and that their inhabitants were of German race. But the vital fact was that the Lorrainers and (still more) the Alsatians had become thoroughly French in sentiment; it was with France, not with Germany, that they were bound by conscious ties of affinity. Accordingly they have always resented their severance from France, and the annexation of these provinces has been a standing source of unrest for forty-four years, has prevented the establishment of any permanently friendly relations between France and Germany, and has contributed to the causes which have produced the war.

There is a powerful and noisy party in Germany called the Pan-Germans, who, basing their policy upon the theory of nationality, claim that German unity is incomplete so long as Holland, Belgium, and German Switzerland remain outside the limits of the empire. They claim Holland and Switzerland because their peoples are of Teutonic blood, and because they were in the Middle Ages part of the kingdom of Germany. They try to put forward similar arguments in the case of Belgium. Of course the real reason for these claims is the desire to control, for trade and military purposes, the harbours of the North Sea coast and the Alpine passes, and to get possession of the rich Dutch and Belgian colonies. But these claims are absolutely inconsistent with the national principle, when honestly interpreted. By all the tests of nationality the Dutch are a nation, proudly conscious of their nationhood, and of their glorious history: though originally of German

blood, their history has turned them into a distinct people, and their language has developed along different lines. This is still more clear in the case of Belgium. Holland certainly has no sense of affinity with Germany, and would desperately resist any attempt to incorporate her in that country. Belgium has heroically shown that she is prepared to undergo the uttermost suffering rather than submit to such a fate. The claims of the Pan-Germans are really an insult to the principle of nationality, which they use as a pretext to cover schemes of naked aggression.

Again, we must remember that there are some regions where nationalities are so intermixed that the national principle gives no clear guidance as to the proper lines of division between states. Such regions are to be found in several parts of South-eastern Europe, notably in Macedonia, and their existence constitutes the chief difficulty in the settlement of that region. But the existence of such regions ought not to stand in the way of the establishment of full nationhood in cases where all the marks of nationhood are present; nor should the fact that the national principle is sometimes used as a cloak for projects of greedy aggression weaken our belief that nationality is the strongest and most natural basis for the organization of states.

The organization of states on the basis of nationhood has spread gradually over Europe, from the west eastwards. It began in England and France in the Middle Ages. Spain and Holland and the Scandinavian countries achieved their nationhood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Central Europe the national unity of Germany and Italy was only worked out, with labour and travail, in the nineteenth century; and the same period saw the beginning of the rise of

the little long-suppressed nations of the south-east, a process still uncompleted. But there still remains a large area of Europe which is as yet (if we may coin a word) ' unnationalized ', or very incompletely nationalized. This area is represented in our map. It includes part of the Russian Empire, a small piece of Germany, practically the whole of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Balkan peninsula. The map has been drawn so as to show how, in this region, political boundaries disregard the lines of division between nationalities. But it is worth while to analyse this region more closely.

III

The first large region occupied by a distinct nationality is the country of the Poles, which lies mainly in Russia, but includes also part of Eastern Germany, and much of the province of Galicia in the Austrian Empire. The kingdom of Poland was once one of the greatest states of Europe. In the fifteenth century it seemed to overshadow Germany, and was vastly more important than Russia ; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it played a very gallant part in resisting the Turks. But the kingdom fell into decay, owing to a faulty social and political system, and in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, by one of the most cynical crimes of history, its whole territory was unscrupulously divided out, in three partitions, by its three neighbours, Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The prime mover in the first partition was Frederick the Great of Prussia, but Russia got the lion's share of the plunder, including a good deal of really Russian territory which had earlier been acquired by the Poles. From the time of these iniquitous partitions the Poles,

among whom patriotism is a passion, never ceased to pray, to conspire, and on favourable occasions to rebel, in the hope of regaining the unity of their realm. Their national tragedy has turned the Poles into a nation of conspirators and anarchists, and they have had a hand in every revolutionary disturbance of the nineteenth century, in other countries as well as their own. Napoleon tried to make use of Polish patriotism, taking most of the Prussian and Austrian sections of the old kingdom to form a Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and for a few years Poland lived again. But when Napoleon fell, free Poland fell with him. The Grand Duchy was taken over by Russia, whose Tsar promised that it should remain a distinct state, with a constitution of its own; but the promise was kept only for fifteen years. Galicia was kept by Austria, and the Poles of Posen and West Prussia fell once again under the rule of Prussia. On the whole, of recent years, the Poles of Galicia have been better treated than the other sections of the divided nation: they have been allowed a substantial amount of Home Rule, as a means of securing their support for the Austrian Government against the other restless national elements in the Austrian Empire, and on the whole they have been reasonably contented, though they have never forgotten the days of their ancient unity and greatness. But the Poles of Russia have been, spasmodically, very bitterly persecuted, and a vain attempt has been made to turn them into Russians. And the Poles of Prussia, especially during the last thirty years, have had to endure a more scientific and systematic, but not less intolerable, oppression, the German Government having entered upon a regular programme of Germanizing these regions by banning the Polish

language, and buying up Polish land for German settlers from the west. This policy has been a complete failure. It has only intensified the passionate yearning of the Poles for the unity and freedom of their ancient realm —a yearning which seemed hopeless until the outbreak of this war. The deliberate brutality of the German policy in Prussian Poland has been defended, for example by Prince Bülow, on the ground that the history of the Poles shows that they are incapable of ruling themselves. It is an ironic commentary on this view that only a hundred years ago exactly the same thing used to be said about the Germans.

Now a new prospect of hope has opened for the Polish nation, by the issue of the Tsar's proclamation promising that if the Allies are victorious in this war Poland shall be reunited, granted a measure of Home Rule, and linked with its sister Russian nation under the Russian Imperial crown. No doubt that proclamation is prompted by Russian interest, and the promise may not seem altogether reliable in face of the fate of the previous promise of 1814, just a hundred years ago. But certainly unity under the Russian crown is the only practicable unity for Poland under existing conditions. If the Germans and Austrians were successful in the war, all hope of Polish unity would be killed : the Poles know what to expect from the Germans. And the situation has been greatly changed in Russia during the last few years, since the institution of the Duma, in which Polish representatives have sat side by side with Russians, and since the rise of a school of Russian politicians who look forward to the transformation of the Russian Empire into a federation of autonomous states on national lines. The Poles themselves have accepted the promise in all

good faith, despite their unhappy experiences in the past; and such extreme Radicals as Prince Kropotkin, and such moderate Russian Liberals as Professor Vinogradoff, unite in believing that a new era is about to dawn in Russia, and that in this era the satisfaction of the long disappointed Polish dream of unity and freedom will be inevitable. Thus there seems ground for hoping that at the end of this war the most cruelly suppressed nationality of Europe will obtain not indeed complete independence, but unity and a real measure of freedom. If that happens, one of the most dangerous centres of revolutionary agitation will have been calmed down, and all Europe will gain.

IV

South of the divided realm of Poland lies the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is the only great state of Europe which has no national basis, and that is why its condition has long been held to be precarious. This Empire is a bundle of nations, and fragments of nations, originally brought together by the lucky marriages and conquests of members of the Habsburg family, and in more recent days held together mainly by fear of what would happen if they broke asunder. The Empire is divided into two distinct halves, with distinct governments, and each of these halves is dominated by a ruling race, the Germans of Austria proper in the Austrian half, and the Magyars or Hungarians in the Hungarian half. Austrians and Hungarians have fought bitterly in the past, and do not love one another even now. But since the Hungarians were given Home Rule, in 1867, the two ruling races have managed to work together, and the reason for this is that they are both largely outnumbered by subject races, who

dislike them both, and desire either independence, or union with their free brethren on the other side of the imperial boundary. Both the German-Austrians and the Hungarians occupy clearly-defined areas—the Austrians in the territory immediately south and south-east of their brothers in Germany proper, the Hungarians in the central part of the Danube and Theiss valleys; but all the outlying parts of the Empire are mainly occupied by other races, quite distinct from both the Austrians and the Hungarians, and in most cases closely related to other free races over the border, as in the case of the Poles, already discussed.

First among these subject races may be named the Bohemians or Czechs, who occupy a large area in the north, a sort of island among the German-speaking peoples, walled in by mountains. The Bohemians look back to a proud national history, the greatest days of which were in the fifteenth century, when the enthusiasm raised by the doctrines of John Hus, and the military genius of a group of great Bohemian soldiers, enabled them triumphantly to defy the might of Germany, and indeed of Europe. The kingdom of Bohemia passed by marriage to the German Dukes of Austria, but the Bohemians proudly maintained their separate national existence, until it was for the time crushed out by a fierce Austrian persecution in the seventeenth century. During the nineteenth century there has been a great revival of national feeling among the Bohemians. They have eagerly studied their own history; they have made their ancient language, long confined to the peasantry, once more respectable by making it the vehicle of a literature of some value. They unsuccessfully revolted against the Austrian rule in 1848; but the failure of that year has not stopped the national movement, and the

government of Bohemia has been a constant difficulty to the Austrians during the last two generations. Unquestionably the Bohemians would like to regain some sort of national independence. They might naturally become a small independent state with guaranteed neutrality : for, if the Allies win in this war, it is not unlikely that powerful monarchies will in future hesitate to disregard such guarantees, and little states will be much safer than they have been in the past.

The whole of the south-eastern part of Hungary, a hilly region known as Transylvania and lying between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube, is mainly inhabited by Rumanians, of the same race and language as the people of the independent kingdom of Rumania, on the other side of the Carpathians. The Rumanians are a very interesting people. They claim to be descended from Latin soldiers and colonists settled in this region in the second century of the Christian era ; and although they must be a very mixed race—for during many centuries they were lost to sight, submerged beneath wave after wave of invading tribes who passed over this region into Europe—yet they have with a singular tenacity preserved a language which is a corruption of ancient Latin, and are thus clearly marked off from all their neighbours. They occupy not only the modern kingdom of Rumania and the Hungarian province of Transylvania, but also the province of Bessarabia, which was rather unfairly taken by Russia in 1878. These regions are fertile and rich in minerals, and the prosperity of the kingdom has shown that the people have real capacity for civilization ; and if the kingdom of Rumania could be extended to correspond with the limits of the Rumanian people, it would certainly become a solid and powerful state, with a very

distinctive character of its own. The Rumanians have, of course, long desired this expansion, and their agitation for this development has for many years been one of the vexing questions of Austro-Hungarian politics. That is why they are watching the course of the war with such tense interest.

In the opposite, or south-western, corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire there is a considerable population of Italians. If you look at the map of Italy you will see a triangular piece of Alpine land jutting into the north Italian plain. This is the 'Tridentine', or district of Trent. It is purely Italian in character, though politically it is part of the Austrian Tyrol. Again, the peninsula of Trieste, which projects into the northern waters of the Adriatic, has a population which is mainly Italian, and, practically until the nineteenth century, it has always been historically as well as geographically a part of Italy. The same is the case with many of the islands and part of the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic. These lands were part of the old free republic of Venice, which was suppressed by Napoleon, and after his fall was seized by Austria. The Italian inhabitants of these historic Italian lands naturally long to be united with their Italian brothers, and they have given a great deal of trouble to the Austrian Government, which has not treated them well. These lands form what is called *Italia irredenta*, or unredeemed Italy; and the acquisition of them is an object of longing to all good Italians, who hope thus to complete the great work of nation-building on which their fathers spent so much blood.

Lastly, the southern and south-western provinces of the Austrian Empire—Slavonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and part of Dalmatia—are mainly inhabited by Serbians, of the same race, language, and traditions as their brothers

in the little free kingdom of Serbia. Indeed these regions were all part of the historic Serbia of the great days before the coming of the Turks, when Serbia seemed likely to become one of the great nations of Europe. The longing of all good Serbians to see these great old days revived has led to an agitation for a Greater Serbia which could only be satisfied at the expense of the Austrian Empire, and which has formed the immediate cause of the present war. But of that we shall presently have more to say.

V

The Austrian Empire thus consists of two small nations —the Hungarians and the Bohemians, and of divided fragments of five other nations, the Germans, the Poles, the Rumanians, the Italians, and the Serbs, the bulk of which in each case lie outside the limits of the Empire. There are also other races, or fragments of races: Ruthenians (in South Galicia), who are closely related to the Russians; Slovaks in the north, cousins of their Bohemian neighbours; Slovenes or Croats in the south-west, who are near relatives of their Serbian neighbours. Among all these races there is a constant state of friction and misunderstanding, due to their forced union, and for a long time the supreme problem of Austrian statesmanship has been the problem of driving this motley and discordant team in single harness. The task is, indeed, impossibly difficult, and cannot be ultimately successful. There is no great state to which the triumph of the national principle would be so ruinous as to the Austrian Empire, for all the other great states of Europe are organized upon a national basis, and derive their strength from that fact.

Just because the national principle is so dangerous

to Austria, she has always been its most resolute foe ; and the history of Austrian policy in the nineteenth century may almost be summed up in the formula, 'resistance to the national principle wherever it shows itself.' This is strikingly illustrated if we recall the great struggles for national unity which have been the chief features of European history during the last hundred years. When the Greeks rose against the Turks in the '20's, their most steadfast enemy, next to the Turks themselves, was the Austrian Government : the Powers whose intervention made the establishment of Greek independence possible were the Allies of to-day, Russia, France, and England. When the Belgians, in the '30's, revolted against the supremacy of Holland, Austria and Prussia would have been ready to reduce them by force ; the Powers whose intervention saved the freedom of Belgium were Belgium's allies of to-day, France and England. The heroic story of the freeing and unification of Italy is essentially the story of a fight against Austria ; and so far as Italy did not owe her freedom to the valour of her own sons, she owed it to the armed intervention of France and the steady sympathy and diplomatic support of England. Most remarkable of all, Austria formed the supreme obstacle to the unification of Germany, and it was not until Austria had been crushed by Prussia, in 1866, that the establishment of a united Germany under Prussian control became possible.

VI

But the most remarkable illustration of the anti-national policy which is forced upon Austria by the condition of her own empire is to be found in her attitude towards the nationalities of the Balkan peninsula, which have been for so many centuries suppressed, and in a large degree barbarized, by the stupid and oppressive dominion of the Turks.

There are five distinct nationalities in this region, not including the Turks, who have never been more than a thinly sprinkled caste of warrior-rulers. We have already said something about the Rumanians, whose independent kingdom as yet occupies less than half of the area peopled by the Rumanian race. The Greeks are the second race, and their history has attracted far more attention in Western Europe than that of the other races. The Greeks have nearly attained their natural limits, though there are still some essentially Greek islands which ought to be added to the kingdom of Greece ; one of these is Cyprus, which is at present under English administration. Once the disorder which has for generations been chronic in South-eastern Europe has been brought to an end, there is every hope that we shall see a vigorous revival of Greek civilization, to the enrichment of the world.

The third of the Balkan nations is the Bulgarians, an honest and solid race of peasants, who in the thirteenth century set up a very formidable power, but whose very existence was forgotten by Europe during the long centuries of subjection to the Turkish yoke. Most people had never heard of them when, in the '70's, the stories of the Bulgarian atrocities aroused the horror of Europe and formed the theme of Gladstone's

Midlothian speeches. Bulgaria was almost the last of the Balkan nations to achieve the beginnings of freedom ; her existence as a free nation only began after the Russo-Turkish war, in 1878. How great is the effect of freedom upon the spirit of a nation is shown by the subsequent development of this little state. The chroniclers of the war of 1878 repeatedly emphasize the servile and spiritless character of the Bulgarian peasantry ; that was the result of five hundred years of alien rule. But after only a single generation the sons of these servile and spiritless peasants showed on the field of Lule Burgas and elsewhere that, fighting in a national cause, they yielded in valour to no soldiery of the world. Bulgaria has now almost reached its natural national limits ; almost, but not quite, for the circumstances of the settlement after the Balkan wars (circumstances indirectly due in a large measure to Austria) robbed her of some regions which ought to belong to her.

The fourth of the Balkan peoples is the most ancient of all, the Albanians, who have dwelt since the dawn of history among the inaccessible rocks in the middle-western part of the peninsula. Never really subjugated or assimilated by any conqueror, they have never escaped from a crude state of unending tribal warfare. Yet they have produced not only fine soldiers, but many able administrators, without whose aid the Turkish power would scarcely have lasted so long as it has. Whether or no the Albanians, if left to themselves, could evolve a stable and orderly system, is hard to say. But it is clear that the Albanian problem is not to be solved by the loan of a German ruler to these wild and proud people.

The last, and in many ways the most interesting, of the Balkan peoples is the Serbian nation. It is spread

over not only Serbia proper, but also the kingdom of Montenegro and (as has been already noted) the Austrian provinces of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, while the province of Croatia is occupied by a closely kindred people. If the Serbian kingdom were enlarged to its natural limits it would thus reach the Adriatic Sea, and form a realm of substantial size, approximately equal to the enlarged Rumania. In the fourteenth century, when we were fighting the French at Cressy and Poitiers, the Serbian Empire included almost the whole of this area, and more; indeed, under the greatest of their kings, Stephen Dushan, who died in 1355, the Serbians bade fair to extend their power over the whole of the Balkan peninsula. But, before their power was consolidated, they had to meet the brunt of the Turkish invasion; and after a hard struggle the freedom of Serbia was broken for four hundred years in the disastrous battle of Kossova, and Europe forgot the existence of this suppressed nationality. But the memory of ancient greatness and of its sudden and tragic downfall is very real to every Serbian peasant. Stephen Dushan is still a national hero; and when in the Balkan war a Serbian army defeated the hated Turks at Kumanovo, almost on the site of the fatal battle of Kossova, the effect upon patriotic emotion was electric. The Serbs were the first of the Balkan peoples to revolt against Turkish rule; indeed, one branch of them, the inhabitants of the little mountain nook of Montenegro, were never really conquered by the Turks at all. The first rising began in Serbia proper in 1804, long before the Greek rebellion; and although the Serbs got little help from Europe, in a long-drawn-out struggle under their gallant leader the swineherd Kara George, they held their own, and

in the end compelled the grant to them of self-government under Turkish suzerainty, in 1826. From that date onwards their dream has been the union of the whole Serbian people, and the revival of some shadow of their ancient greatness. They achieved full independence with the help of Russia in 1878. But both before and since that date it has been made plain to them that their inevitable foe, and the great obstacle to their dream of Serbian unity, was to be found in Austria. Hence the agitations which led to the unhappy murder of last June, and thence to the great war. But to understand this, and its bearing upon the national principle in this region, it is necessary to consider the policy of Austria in regard to the little Balkan nations.

VII

The Turks, who had crushed the rising nations of Serbs, Bulgarians, and Rumanians, afterwards overthrew the Hungarians also, and pressed on to the very gates of Vienna, which they twice besieged, in the sixteenth, and again in the seventeenth century. Accordingly the business of driving back the Turkish power fell in the first instance to the Austrians. In a series of remarkable campaigns at the end of the seventeenth century they drove back the Turks beyond the Danube, and won from them the territory occupied by the Hungarians, by the Rumanians of Transylvania, and by the Serbs of Slavonia. For a short time they even crossed the Danube and occupied a part of Serbia proper (1718–39). But it did not occur to the Austrian conquerors to give independence or self-government to these peoples whom they had released from Turkish rule. They merely added them to their own empire. From this time the Austrian Government made it

a principal object of policy to expand south-eastwards at the expense of the Turk, in the hope of ultimately reaching Salonika and the Aegean Sea. That ambition the Austrians have steadily pursued ever since, though with singularly little success. And as the rise of free states in the Balkans would be inconsistent with this ambition, as well as a source of disturbance to the composite Austrian Empire itself, Austria has never welcomed the creation of these states.

The reason for the non-success of Austria's policy of expansion at the expense of the Turk was that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries she found a serious rival in this field in Russia, who possessed this great advantage, that she was of the same race and religion as most of the Balkan peoples, and could therefore appeal for their loyalty in a way that Austria could not, and did not desire to, imitate. There has always been this marked distinction between the policy of the two rival empires in the Balkans, that while Austria has consistently opposed the rise of free states, Russia has as steadily encouraged and supported this idea. Since the time of her first serious intervention in Balkan affairs, in 1772–4, she has (unlike Austria) scarcely attempted to annex territory directly; but every victory which she has won over the Turks (and there have been many Russo-Turkish wars between 1772 and 1878) has been marked by an increase in the number of free states or in the degree of self-government allowed to them. It would, of course, be absurd to suggest that this has been due to any exalted magnanimity on Russia's part: she has hoped to increase her influence by appearing as the patron of the little nations; her policy has no doubt been quite as much dictated by self-interest as that of Austria. But this

at least is true, that Russia's view of her own interest has led to the freedom of the suppressed nationalities in this region, and that Austria's view of her own interest has made her the steady foe of all such developments. The success of the Russian policy was largely due to the fact that she was able to make use of the powerful force of national feeling. But her success was regarded, throughout the nineteenth century, with great anxiety, not only by Austria, but by England, which, elsewhere the friend of the national principle, was here turned into its enemy by jealous fear of Russia. Neither England, nor Russia herself, realized until a very late date that, once these states were really free and began to prosper, they would refuse to be the mere puppets even of the Power to which they owed their liberty.

The last and most important military intervention of Russia in Balkan affairs was the war of 1877–8, which followed on the revolt of the Bosnian Serbs and the Bulgarian atrocities. Having beaten the Turks to their knees, Russia compelled them to grant complete independence to Rumania and Serbia, and to establish the new State of Bulgaria as a practically independent State, within limits nearly corresponding to those which Bulgaria gained in the last Balkan war (Treaty of San Stefano, 1878). But this did not at all suit Austria. The setting up of these states, under Russian influence, put an end to all hope of her realizing her ambition of controlling the territory between the Danube and the Aegean Sea. Backed by Germany, with whom she was about to make that intimate alliance which has lasted ever since, and also by England, still governed by her old fears of Russia, she got the Treaty of San Stefano revised by the Powers ; the territory

of Bulgaria was cut down ; and the Serbian regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under Austrian administration. The Bosnians resisted their new masters, but in vain ; and their defeat seemed to put an end to all hope of Serbian unity, and made Austria appear—what indeed she was—the inevitable foe of the Serbian national cause. Nevertheless there was for a long time a pro-Austrian party in Serbia ; and the fact that the king and court were largely identified with this party, which seemed to most Serbians anti-national and unpatriotic, helps to explain the most discreditable episode in the recent history of Serbia —the murder of the last Serbian king of the Obrenovitch line, and his replacement by a member of the rival and exiled family of Karageorgevitch, the descendants of the hero of the Serbian rising at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The fact that Austria was the inevitable foe of the cause of Serbian national unity has been made clearer than ever during the last twenty years—when Austria and Germany, now closely united, began to work out the old programme of expansion towards the south-east on new and more ambitious lines. This bold scheme, which looked far beyond the Balkan peninsula, and aimed at the establishment of Austro-German influence through Asia Minor and Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf, and perhaps ultimately to India, has been, together with the equally bold naval and colonial ambitions of Germany in the west, the main cause of the new grouping of European States, and of the present war. Its successful accomplishment depended upon several things. First of all, there was to be a close alliance with Turkey —the ancient and hated oppressor of the Balkan nations. Turkey was practically to become a member of the

Triple Alliance, and to leave the exploitation of her commercial resources in German hands. General Bernhardi has told us that Turkey is the 'natural ally' of Germany, and Prince von Bülow says that Turkey 'serves German interests from the industrial, military, and political points of view', and has been 'a useful and important link in the chain of our political relations'. So the Kaiser began to cultivate friendly relations with Abdul Hamid, and, after his disconcerting fall, with the Young Turks, and German officers took in hand the reconstruction of the Turkish army. But the bolstering up of the Turkish power was a direct challenge to the Balkan nationalities, which could only achieve their unity at the expense of the Turks. Secondly, the great scheme involved that the Balkan States should be kept apart, and as weak as possible. This particularly applied to Serbia, which lay right in the path of Austrian advance towards the Aegean Sea, and intervened between the German powers and their 'natural ally'. So Serbia must be somehow reduced to dependence on Austria; and this was at first attempted by commercial methods, through a tariff war, which was ruinous to Serbian trade, and reduced the Serbians to the highest pitch of exasperation. Lastly, the direct power of Austria in the Balkans was to be increased as far as possible. A splendid opportunity of doing this presented itself in 1908, when Austria, backed by Germany, suddenly announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, hitherto administered under the nominal suzerainty of Turkey. The Serbians were, of course, wild with indignation, but they were powerless to resist. Russia, scarcely recovered from the Japanese war, was unready to fight; and Germany announced, in the grandiloquent phrase of the Kaiser,

that she 'stood in shining armour beside her ally', like a knight of romance succouring the weak and the oppressed. From that moment the feeling of the Serbians for Austria became one of inextinguishable hatred, and, both in Serbia itself and in the annexed provinces, secret societies and conspiracies began to spring up, as was indeed inevitable.

It was a grave blow to the Austro-German plans when three of the Balkan States—largely under the influence of the fears which these plans had aroused—forgot their jealousies and formed a league against the Turks. It was a greater blow still when this league proved its superiority in the field, and the German-trained Turkish army was defeated, and the Turk almost driven out of Europe. The threads of the great scheme had to be painfully gathered up again. In the London conferences, when the Powers intervened to regulate the terms of peace, the influence of Austria and Germany could not prevent the weakening of the 'natural ally' and the strengthening of the little conquering nations; but they devoted all their efforts to preventing Serbia from getting a foothold on the Adriatic, because that would have made her commercially independent of Austria. And as Serbia could not win the natural price of her victories in the addition to her realm of territory occupied by Serbs, since most of this territory was in the hands of Austria, she had to be compensated elsewhere, in a region which should naturally have fallen to Bulgaria. This had, from the Austro-German point of view, the happy effect of bringing about a quarrel between the victorious allies, which led to the wretched second Balkan war; and if it had not been for the intervention of Rumania, it is quite likely that the result would have been the

downfall of Serbia and the revival of 'our natural ally'. Thus Austrian and German policy succeeded in ruining an unequalled opportunity for the satisfaction of national aspirations in the Balkans, and for the making of a permanent friendly alliance between the reinvigorated Balkan powers. These things would have been a blessing for the peace of Europe; the Balkans would have ceased to be the running sore in the polity of Europe which they have been for so long. But the peace of Europe, and the satisfaction of national aspirations, were not to the interests of Austria or of Germany.

Is it wonderful that this truncated settlement, which left Serbia, after her heroic efforts, apparently as far as ever from her dream of national unity, should have been followed by a new activity of agitation in the Serbian provinces of Austria? The murder of the Archduke last June was the sort of result that might be expected from a proud and baffled people who have but recently escaped from four centuries of training in lawlessness under the Turkish yoke. Deeds as horrible, done under no greater provocation, are to be found in the history of every nation; and although that is no defence for an indefensible crime, it is at any rate an explanation. Although no proof has yet been afforded that the Serbian Government had any previous knowledge of the deed, or that the Serbian people sympathized with it, the murder obviously presented a splendid excuse to Austria and Germany for dealing once and for all with Serbia, which had proved so inconvenient an obstacle to the great scheme, and for reducing her to complete dependence. The opportunity came at a moment when the German military machine was in a state of perfect readiness, with everything prepared

for war, the Kiel Canal just deepened, the secret of the great Krupp guns not yet out, the Zeppelins equipped in their sheds, the quarries and cement-beds all prepared in France, the coal-ships ready to set out from distant ports to supply commerce-raiders, and all the army of spies at their posts. A moment so admirable might never recur ; and so the war began.

VIII

It had arisen immediately out of a great stroke against the natural aspirations of a little and divided nation in the south-east ; it was driven home promptly by a villainous and cowardly blow against another small nation in the north-west, whose sole offence was that it trusted to the plighted honour of a nation that had once itself known the miseries of weakness and disunion ; and it had for its immediate aim the permanent ruin of a great nation which has through centuries been in the van of civilization in Europe, and which, if it was once led astray by the dream of dominion over other peoples, has long since learnt to be satisfied with its own freedom and prosperity. If ever the cause of nationality were at stake in any war, it is at stake in this war. And if the ultimate victory falls where it must fall if honour and freedom are to survive in the world, then one outcome of the victory must be the final triumph of the national principle, the final adjustment of the political geography of Europe on the sound and just basis of nationality. Belgium, the martyr, must be recompensed and assured for ever of the sanctity of her territory. The brutal injustices which Prussia has inflicted upon other nations in the pursuit of German unity and greatness must be redeemed, and the Alsatian allowed to regain citizen-

ship in his beloved France if he wishes it; the Dane of Schleswig must be no more severed from his brother to the north; the Poles of Posen and of Cracow must be reunited, after so long a severance, in the fatherland which they once shared with the Pole of Warsaw. The little nations of the south-east must at last be allowed to achieve national unity, and to work out their destinies and develop their distinctive civilization in peace. Greater Serbia and greater Rumania must make their appearance as solidly organized states on the map of Europe. Bulgaria must regain the Bulgarian lands of which she has been stripped, largely because of the selfish ambitions of greater states. The last of the Isles of Greece under foreign rule must be added to the Hellenic realm. Unredeemed Italy must be rejoined to her mother-state. The Bohemians must regain their long-lost freedom, either in full independence or in a federal autonomy. The proud Magyar must be content with a Hungary which is truly Hungarian, and cease to lord it over peoples of another race. And finally, the Germans themselves, though they have been in these latter years the villains of the nationalist drama, must be content with the rich and wide lands which their sons have peopled; but they must not, any more than any other free nationality, be made to suffer the indignity of partition and disunion which they have been ready to force upon others. If they think fit, the Austrian Germans must be allowed to join the great confederacy of their fellow countrymen; or, if that seems better, to join with their fellow Catholics, the Bavarians, with whom they have more sympathy than either feels for the Prussian, in a new confederacy. There are many difficulties in these readjustments. But only if the statesmen who

will have the task of constructing the new Europe keep constantly in mind the principle of nationality will they be able to build permanently and well. Only then shall we have a Europe from which the bitterness of disappointed national aspirations, the fruitful source of discord, will have been banished—a Europe in which each member of the great European family will be free to develop its distinctive character and civilization as it best can, unthreatened by the arrogant claim of any single member of the family to force its own *Kultur*, its own ideas, its own modes of organization, upon the rest, and protected by a universal respect for mutual rights, guaranteed by treaties that none will dare to dishonour.

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